Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

- **Born:** Edgar Poe
  January 19, 1809
  Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.
- **Died:** October 7, 1849 (aged 40)
  Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.
- American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic.
- He is considered as the part of Romantic Movement.
- He is best known for his tales of mystery and macabre.
- He was the earliest practitioners of the short story.
- He was the inventor of detective fiction genre.
- Poe was also the principal forerunner of the "art for art's sake" movement in 19th-century European literature.
- Poe's three tales of ratiocination—"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Purloined Letter," and "The Mystery of Marie Roget"—are recognized as the models which established the major characters and literary conventions of detective fiction, specifically the amateur sleuth who solves a crime that has confounded the authorities and whose feats of deductive reasoning are documented by an admiring associate.
- He was abandoned by his parents and became orphan but taken by John and Frances Allan, of Richmond, Virginia. The Allans served as a foster family and gave him the name "Edgar Allan Poe", though they never formally adopted him.
- He could not complete his university because of lack of money.
- His first collection of poems were "Tamerlane and Other Poems" (1827) credited only to "a Bostonian".
- It is a 40 page collection.
- In Jan 1845, he published his poem "The Raven" to instant success. It appeared in the "Evening Mirror".
- In 1835 when he was 26 years, he married his cousin who was 13 years old.
- He served in US Army.
- His only drama is Politian.
- He was awarded for his short story "MS. Found in a Bottle"
- Poe became the assistant editor of Burton's Gentleman's Magazine.
- In 1839, the collection "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" was published in 2 vol.
- He wanted to start his journal 'The Penn' based on Philadelphia. The journal is also indicated as "The Stylus". But he never published it.
- He became editor of 'Broadway Journal'.
- He re-invented science-fiction "The Balloon Hoax"
- "The Poetic Principal" and "The Philosophy of Composition" are also by Poe.
- He wrote his first poem at the age of 15.
- Poe borrowed meter and rhythm of the "Raven" from Elizabeth Barret's poem "The Geraldines Courtship".
- The Mystery Writers of America present an annual award known as the Edgar Award for distinguished work in the mystery genre.
- On October 3, 1849, Poe was found delirious on the streets of Baltimore, "in great distress, and... in need of immediate assistance", according to Joseph W. Walker, who found him. He was taken to the Washington Medical College, where he died on Sunday, October 7, 1849, at 5:00 in the morning.

- **Literary style and themes**
  - Poe's best known fiction works are Gothic, adhering to the genre's conventions to appeal to the public taste. His most recurring themes deal with questions of death, including its physical signs, the effects of decomposition, concerns of premature burial (*Premature burial, also known as live burial, burial alive, or vivisepulture, means to be buried while still alive*.), the reanimation of the dead, and mourning. Many of his works are generally considered part of the dark romanticism (*Dark Romanticism is a literary subgenre of Romanticism, reflecting popular fascination with the irrational, the demonic and the grotesque. Often conflated with Gothic fiction, it has shadowed the euphoric Romantic movement ever since its 18th-century beginnings. Edgar Allan Poe is often celebrated as one of the supreme exponents of the tradition.)* genre, a literary reaction to transcendentalism which Poe strongly disliked. He referred to followers of the transcendental movement as "Frog-Pondians", after the pond on Boston Common, and ridiculed their writings as "metaphor—run mad," lapsing into "obscurity for obscurity's sake" or "mysticism for mysticism's sake". Poe once wrote in a letter to Thomas Holley Chivers that he did not dislike transcendentalists, "only the pretenders and sophists among them". Beyond horror, Poe also wrote satires, humor tales, and hoaxes. Poe also reinvented science fiction, responding in his writing to emerging technologies such as hot air balloons in "The Balloon-Hoax" . Poe wrote much of his work using themes aimed specifically at mass-market tastes. To that end, his fiction often included elements of popular pseudosciences (*Pseudoscience consists of statements, beliefs, or practices that claim to be both scientific and factual but are incompatible with the scientific method. Pseudoscience is often characterized by contradictory, exaggerated or unfalsifiable claims; reliance on confirmation bias rather than rigorous attempts at refutation; lack of openness to evaluation by other experts; absence of systematic practices when developing hypotheses; and continued adherence long after the pseudoscientific hypotheses have been experimentally discredited.*), such as phrenology (*Phrenology (from Ancient Greek (phrēn) 'mind', and (logos) 'knowledge') is a pseudoscience which involves the measurement of bumps on the skull to predict mental traits. It is based on the concept that the brain is the organ of the mind, and that certain brain areas have localized, specific functions or modules. Although both of those ideas have a basis in reality, phrenology generalized beyond empirical knowledge in a way that departed from science. The central phrenological notion that measuring the contour of the skull can predict personality traits is discredited by empirical research. Developed by German physician Franz Joseph Gall in 1796, the discipline was influential in the 19th century, especially from about 1810 until 1840.*) and physiognomy *(Physiognomy (from the Greek, 'physis', meaning "nature", and 'gnomon', meaning "judge" or "interpreter") is the practice of assessing a person's character or personality from their outer appearance—especially the face. The term can also refer to the general appearance of a person, object, or terrain without reference to its implied characteristics—as in the physiognomy of an individual plant (see plant life-form) or of a plant community*).
  - Poe's writing reflects his literary theories, which he presented in his criticism and also in essays such as "The Poetic Principle". He disliked didacticism (*Didacticism is a philosophy that emphasizes instructional and informative qualities in literature, art, and design.)* and allegory (*As a literary device or artistic form, an allegory is a narrative or visual representation in which a character, place, or event can be interpreted to represent a hidden meaning with moral or political significance. Writers and speakers typically use allegories to convey (semi-)hidden or complex meanings through symbolic figures, actions, imagery, or events, which together create the moral, spiritual, or political meaning the author wishes to convey. Many allegories use personification of abstract concepts.),* though he believed that meaning in literature should be an undercurrent just beneath the surface. Works with obvious meanings, he wrote, cease to be art. He believed that work of quality should be brief and focus on a specific single effect. To that end, he believed that the writer should carefully calculate every sentiment and idea.
    Poe describes his method in writing "The Raven" in the essay "The Philosophy of Composition", and he claims to have strictly followed this method. It has been questioned whether he really followed this system, however. T. S. Eliot said: "It is difficult for us to read that essay without reflecting that if Poe plotted out his poem with such calculation, he might

have taken a little more pains over it: the result hardly does credit to the method." Biographer Joseph Wood Krutch described the essay as "a rather highly ingenious exercise in the art of rationalization".

- During his lifetime, Poe was mostly recognized as a literary critic. Fellow critic James Russell Lowell called him "the most discriminating, philosophical, and fearless critic upon imaginative works who has written in America", suggesting—rhetorically—that he occasionally used prussic acid instead of ink. A favorite target of Poe's criticism was Boston's acclaimed poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who was often defended by his literary friends in what was later called "The Longfellow War". Poe accused Longfellow of "the heresy of the didactic", writing poetry that was preachy, derivative, and thematically plagiarized. Poe correctly predicted that Longfellow's reputation and style of poetry would decline, concluding, "We grant him high qualities, but deny him the Future".
- Poe's early detective fiction tales featuring C. Auguste Dupin laid the groundwork for future detectives in literature. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said, "Each [of Poe's detective stories] is a root from which a whole literature has developed.... Where was the detective story until Poe breathed the breath of life into it?" The Mystery Writers of America have named their awards for excellence in the genre the "Edgars"
- Poe's work also influenced science fiction, notably Jules Verne, who wrote a sequel to Poe's novel The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket called An Antarctic Mystery, also known as The Sphinx of the Ice Fields. Science fiction author H. G. Wells noted, "Pym tells what a very intelligent mind could imagine about the south polar region a century ago". In 2013, The Guardian cited Pym as one of the greatest novels ever written in the English language, and noted its influence on later authors such as Doyle, Henry James, B. Traven, and David Morrell.
- Horror author and historian H. P. Lovecraft was heavily influenced by Poe's horror tales, dedicating an entire section of his long essay, "Supernatural Horror in Literature", to his influence on the genre. In his letters, Lovecraft stated, "When I write stories, Edgar Allan Poe is my model." Alfred Hitchcock once said, "It's because I liked Edgar Allan Poe's stories so much that I began to make suspense films".
- Even so, Poe has also received criticism. This is partly because of the negative perception of his personal character and its influence upon his reputation. William Butler Yeats was occasionally critical of Poe and once called him "vulgar". Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson reacted to "The Raven" by saying, "I see nothing in it", and derisively referred to Poe as "the jingle man". Aldous Huxley wrote that Poe's writing "falls into vulgarity" by being "too poetical"—the equivalent of wearing a diamond ring on every finger.

➢ **Selected works:**

- *Short stories:*
  - "The Black Cat"
  - "The Cask of Amontillado"
  - "A Descent into the Maelström"
  - "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"
  - "The Fall of the House of Usher"
  - "The Gold-Bug"
  - "Hop-Frog"
  - "The Imp of the Perverse"
  - "Ligeia"
  - "The Masque of the Red Death"
  - "Morella"
  - "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"
  - "Never Bet the Devil Your Head"

- "The Oval Portrait"
- "The Pit and the Pendulum"
- "The Premature Burial"
- "The Purloined Letter"
- "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether"
- "The Tell-Tale Heart"
- "Loss of Breath"

- *Poetry:*
  - "Al Aaraaf"
  - "Annabel Lee"
  - "The Bells"
  - "The City in the Sea"
  - "The Conqueror Worm"
  - "A Dream Within a Dream"
  - "Eldorado"
  - "Eulalie"
  - "The Haunted Palace"
  - "To Helen"
  - "Lenore"
  - "Tamerlane"
  - "The Raven"
  - "Ulalume"
- *Other works:*
  - Politian (1835) – Poe's only play
  - The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838) – Poe's only complete novel
  - The Journal of Julius Rodman (1840) – Poe's second, unfinished novel
  - "The Balloon-Hoax" (1844) – A journalistic hoax printed as a true story
  - "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) – Essay
  - Eureka: A Prose Poem (1848) – Essay
  - "The Poetic Principle" (1848) – Essay
  - "The Light-House" (1849) – Poe's last, incomplete work

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